

## EDITORIAL

This issue of the HWSJ has become almost of its own accord a special subject – the First World War, which reflects mainly the Study Day talks given in February 2006. I know that some of you – understandably – do not particularly like single subject issues but I make no apology. The First World War has not had a mention (except in passing as part of articles on other subjects) since HWSJ 34 in September 1998 – ten issues ago! For a subject that is so central to HW's life and writing that is rather a long gap. A gap happily filled, of course, by subjects equally important.

I have personally found Dr Mike Maloney's research into the days covering the missing pages from HW's 1918 diary (see AW, *HW and the 1st World War*, p 143 and Note 35 on p 190) extremely thorough, erudite and valuable. It has been something that has puzzled and worried me. Brian Dolan and I spent much time discussing this when the 'war' volume was being prepared, doggedly trying to reach a valid conclusion – to no avail. I was however totally certain in my own mind that HW had indeed gone over to France on 27 March 1918, despite no official evidence and indeed everything seeming to point against such a thing occurring. The only reason I could suggest was to accompany a draft: now borne out by this new approach. I think the problem is now solved. My only quibble is that I think HW did stay on in France at least for a day or so (for some reason not known). I find HW's description in *A Test to Destruction* of the route march along the Baizieux-Warloi-Ascheux road too authentic for it not to have been undertaken by him at that time – although I know how superbly he could manipulate material, there is something about that description (*Test*, p. 143) that shouts 'authentic' to me. Once his task (whatever it was and for whatever reason undertaken – and once in France he could quite easily have been commandeered for another escort duty or he may have been asked to deliver a message to 2 Beds by Ampthill – quite a possibility) was achieved he was then free to return to England – still with plenty of time to take part in Maloney's surprise discovery on 11 April.

Dr Maloney's sympathetic rendering of the problems HW was labouring under at that time was enhanced by its rendering in his soft Irish brogue – something I cannot reproduce in the Journal!

That John Gregory gets two bites of the cherry here is easily explained: they were actually both together as one talk at the Study Day. For the printed version, however, they needed separating and expanding. It is my personal policy that as much as possible must be got into print on any particular subject at any time – opportunities do not necessarily reoccur.

I am, however, quite amused (kindly so) at John's statement that one sometimes feels there must be little new to learn about HW. I can assure you we ain't scratched the surface yet! I always said that the biography was merely an outline, a skeleton – the barest bones on which would be laid down layer upon layer probably *ad infinitum*. To me, the biography is almost a series of 'headings' that we are slowly but surely working through in depth. John himself knows how frustrated I was when writing the 'beast' at how little expansion I was allowed (the 'war' chapter was prime example, but that allowed for another book in full detail!) – my only consolation then was that all the detail would be food for journal articles in due course!

You may find two articles on the Battle of Loos indigestible, and it was perhaps unfortunate that both Ian Walker and myself chose this subject in separate talks so close together (blame the anniversary!): but they do each treat different aspects of an important – and sometimes overlooked – battle and HW's treatment of it in his writings deserves detailed analysis. I must reiterate that I felt very cross indeed about Nick Lloyd's somewhat glib bending of the facts to fit his own particular line of argument. *STAND TO!* printed a shortened version of my protest in letter form. Sue Cumming has remarked that I am like a lioness defending its cub. But as Manager of the HWLE I do have to deal with a great deal of that sort of thing. It is like the Gorgon's head – as soon as one strikes down one of Medusa's snakes, another grows!

This is an extra long issue – and how amazingly these articles have all cross-referenced. Even so some small items peripheral to the subject have had to be left out. Other articles that were under consideration will be at the top of the pending pile for next year's journal. There is plenty here that merits your own comments and involvement – so please don't be shy of making contact and having some inter-action. As always – enjoy!